

preferences for certain species and/or plant parts. For example, after pre-monsoon burning of the grassland, the tahr eagerly took the fresh regrowth of *Chrysopogon zeylanicus* by grasping the leaf blades and pulling out the whole succulent stem. However, as the blades matured, less was taken. With the post-monsoon drying of the grassland the inflorescences were eaten from time to time, and the *Chrysopogon* growing in the wetter, low lying areas was taken more frequently. The grassland dried even more during the winter (January-February) and this was considered the time of lowest forage quality for Nilgiri tahr. My subjective impression was that the tahr's rate of movement while grazing was much faster, suggesting a lower density of acceptable food items.

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Normally they occasionally entered small *shola* patches a few metres wide, but during the dry season they penetrated up to 10 m into the larger patches, browsing on trees and shrubs.

Nilgiri tahr feed on a variety of plants. Their selection of food items in terms of species and plant parts probably reflects seasonal changes in nutritional quality and availability. The actual diet of Nilgiri tahr probably varies considerably between localities, as it does for bighorn sheep (Shackleton & Shank, in press). Nilgiri tahr in much drier lowland habitats are primarily browsers (Davidar 1978).

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9. SEX RATIO IN *LEPUS NIGRICOLLIS*

On 31st March, 1983 I was in a ravine in panchayat land at Village Baskarnawat in Bansur Tehsil in Alwar district. Between 1600 and 1730 hrs. the labour who were with me killed six common hare (*Lepus nigricollis*). All were females (i.e. sex ratio between ♂ and ♀ was 0:6). All were lactating, as I found out by pinching their teats. I examined

their uterus all of which were empty.

It was interesting that among the six hares killed none were male. It was perhaps due to dissimilar sex ratio between male and female animals or due to some post-parturition weakness which prevented females from being speedy enough to escape when chased.

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